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ABSTRACT

This journal provides 12 brief articles focused on open education. Topics explored include (1) open education and reading, (2) mainstreaming, (3) characteristics of an open teacher, (4) administration of an open concept school, (5) an existential methodology in the language arts, (6) social studies in open education, (7) open education in early childhood classrooms, (8) community-based instructional programs (Boy Scouts) as a laboratory for teacher education, (9) self-esteem, (10) using learning activity packages in an open education classroom, (11) the open classroom in the high school, and (12) implementation of problem-solving activities in a consumer research unit for seventh graders. (Author/RH)

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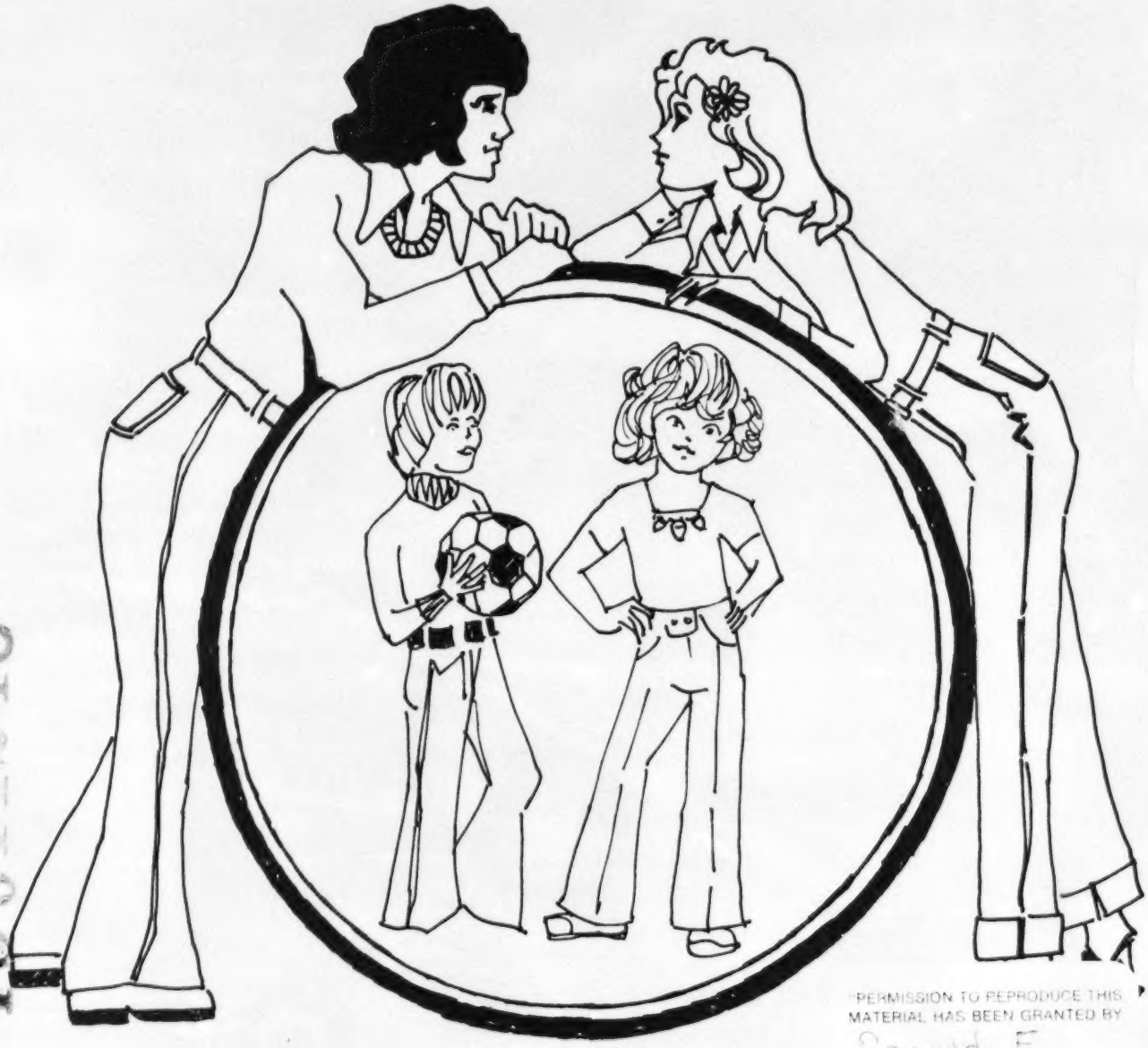

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OPENING EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

"Open Education Revisited"

Max Bough, Indiana State University, Guest Editor
Fall, 1979

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INTRODUCTION

by

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Professor of Education
Indiana State University

Each of the thousands of classrooms across this nation is located somewhere on a continuum from openness to closed. How one determines the point at which to place an individual classroom depends on a number of factors. These include, among others, the relation between teacher and pupil, the relation among the pupils in a class, how curricular and instructional decisions are made, the degree of individualized learning, and the amount of equipment available for different styles of learning. Volumes would be needed to deal with the possibilities inherent in the classroom and with the factors that impinge on the teaching-learning process. The articles included in this issue can do little more than skim the surface.

Dick Biberstine emphasizes the necessary balance of freedom and order in the teaching of reading. Loran Braught see PL 94-142 in a completely new light, the mandated opening of the classroom. Glen Brown and Stan Gross at last define the open teacher. Burnie Cerra gives some practical advice to the would-be administrator of an open school.

Russ Hamm makes suggestions for instruction consistent with the open methodology and an existential philosophy. Ralph Jones discusses the use of learning centers, especially in social studies, as a means of opening the traditional classroom. Jane Schollaert and Jan McCarthy discuss four types of "open" education in the early childhood classroom. Jerry Summers would open the classroom to the community; he suggests that would-be teachers could learn much from the Boy Scout educational program. Jim Tyson stresses the importance of achievement to self worth. Ben Walker suggests learning packets as a desirable methodology for achievement in the open classroom.

Each writer has viewed the possibilities for opening education from his own point of interest. If there had been a dozen more, there would have been a dozen more views. Certainly the American classroom of 1979 is more open than it was fifty, even twenty years ago. Yet much is yet to be done. How it is done and when it is done is dependent upon the skill with which it is done.

Open Education and Reading

by

Richard D. Biberstine
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Indiana State University

Open Education is not determined by the structure of the building nor can it be charged for the chaos that comes from confusing the term "openness" with "permissiveness."

The aspects of open education in reading instruction that are so essential, are those that pertain to the openness between the teacher and the learner. This is largely an openness of communication which recognizes both the process and product of reading instruction. The process includes all that happens to the learner as he progresses from the infant in the home to the time he has become an accomplished reader. It includes the acquisition of oral language, all the way to the enjoyable and worthwhile outcomes that can be achieved through effective reading. These worthwhile outcomes are really the products of reading. The remainder of this article will be devoted to open education as it relates to the learning environment of reading instruction in the school.

Learning Versus Teaching

A most pertinent question for teachers to ask is, "How effective is the student responding to the learning environment of the classroom?" We do know that many of us learned to read in situations that were somewhat less than ideal. Some very conscientious teachers have attempted to teach reading in tense, rigid, and authoritarian environment. The fact that some were able to learn under these conditions does not condone the practices. In open education the maximal learning of every child in the room is emphasized.

There are some classrooms where children are learning to dislike the process of reading even though the product is desirable. We have all seen children come into a first grade desiring to learn to read the first day. After a number of anixety producing setbacks the child becomes unsure of his ability and desire to read. Deep inside he still wants to read but in some cases the emphasis on grade level norms, labeling, busywork, keeping one's place and a whole host of other frustrations, that accompany a rigid lock-step reading program, takes their toll in the learning environment of the classroom.

Camilla Low suggests some principles that influence learning that should be taken into consideration in our efforts to teach in a way that is conducive to learning.

a. Learning takes place more readily if the child accepts as useful and important to him the activities in which he is expected to engage.

b. A child's learning is both richer and easier if he shares in the selecting and setting the goals of learning, in planning ways to gain them, and in measuring his own progress toward them.

c. A child learns to solve his life problems, some of which he cannot now anticipate, only to the degree that he is capable of understanding and directing his own actions.

d. Learning is more efficient if it has satisfying emotional content, if feeling is supportive of thinking.

e. Firsthand experience makes a deeper impression upon the person than vicarious experience.

f. Learning is facilitated and reinforced when more than one sensory approach is used.

g. A child learns best when he is relieved of too great pressure to compete and when he feels reasonably confident that he can accomplish what is expected of him.

h. A child learns best when his failures are viewed constructively by a teacher who likes and respects him and when appropriate remedial or corrective measures are worked out by him.

i. Attitudes, feelings, values are learned. Every experience involves a constellation of such feelings.

j. A child learns best when his efforts are appreciated by his teacher and classmates.

k. A child learns best when he is freed from the distractions of personal problems.

l. A child learns best when the rhythm of mental activity, physical activity, and relaxation is appropriate for him.

m. Learning opportunities are richer for children when they are not restricted to the things that the teacher already knows.[1]

Freedom Versus Order

As one considers open education we eventually come to the question of order and freedom in teaching. The authoritarian teacher emphasizes order to the neglect of freedom. The permissive teacher emphasizes freedom to the neglect of order. Either of these positions cause problems in reading instruction. A third alternative is the teacher that seeks a balance between order and freedom based on the needs of the child and the teaching situation. The child is given as much freedom as he can profitably use, balanced with the order necessary to learn. This balance may be as different as the interests, needs, capacities and learning styles of the children involved in a given classroom situation. Sister Mary Elizabeth Dye writes:

[1] Taken from Camilla M. Low, "Selecting and Evaluating Learning Experiences," Language Skills in Elementary Education by Paul Anderson, New York: MacMillan Company.

> . . .Too much order and too little freedom hamper the creative act; too little order and too much freedom impede the actualizing of the creative act into a creative product. There must be enough freedom to challenge the individual's creative potential and enough order to provide him the means to actualize this potential. Such balancing of freedom and order generated a nurturing climate for creativity. An authoritarian climate is high in order and low in freedom; a laissez-faire climate is high in freedom and low in order; a democratic climate is high in both freedom and order. . .[2]

The teacher in open education must know her children sufficiently well to provide the proper balances that will create an optimal learning environment necessary for each child to learn to read.

Success versus Failure

The individualization of instruction found in open education is necessary to make sure we are not giving children learning tasks in reading that are inappropriate to the child's needs and capacity. If teachers make erroneous assumptions about the needs and abilities of children they will have unrealistic expectations that predetermine experiences of frustration and failure for some children.

There are various areas of reading instruction, where teachers may make erroneous assumptions that would inhibit rather than enhance the child's chances for success in reading. One example is the reading materials that the child is expected to use. Materials should be appropriate to the child's needs, interests, and achievement in reading. Reading materials that are too difficult for the individual will cause problems in reading. It has been estimated that from 25% to over 33% of the children in typical classrooms, are reading in materials so difficult for them, that the materials actually interfere with their reading progress. Morton Botel writes:

> Probably the most significant reading problem today is the proper placement of pupils in books that they can read with success and profit. Success in reading leads to further success in reading abilities and skills. Only through proper placement of pupils can they progress in reading skills.
>
> Too many pupils are being forced to read books that are too difficult for them. When they meet such frustration, they lose interest, become overanxious, and their learning is retarded or stopped.[3]

[2]Dye, M. E. "An Inquiry into Creativity and Its Nurturing Climate," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1963. Dissertation Abstracts, 1964, 25, p. 320.

[3]Botel, Morton, Botel Reading Inventory - Guide, Chicago: Follett Education Corporation, 1970, p. 3.

Frustration with materials should not be permitted to be a blockage to reading instruction in the school. In open education, the needs of the child hold higher priority than any aspect of the curriculum. It is fruitless to cover material that is teaching the child to dislike both the process and product of reading.

The experiences that lead to successes in reading instruction also are profitable in raising the self concept of child. Children who have more difficulty in reading need real successes to raise their self-esteem. Psychiatrist William Glasser points to lack of success as a major problem of the American schools. He holds that many children "believe they would have very little chance to succeed or be happy in the world as they saw it." He also suggested that successes and failures in school have a significant impact upon the child's future.

> . . .I believe that if a child, no matter what his background, can succeed in school, he has an excellent chance for success in life. If he fails at any stage of his educational career -- elementary school, junior high, high school or college -- his chances for success in life are greatly diminished."[4]

The child's record of successes in school and especially in reading are crucial to his continuing motivation, to the value the child places upon his efforts and to his whole outlook about reading instruction as it pertains to him.

Open education must provide environments where success is possible for every child and individual mistakes are viewed as "stepping stones" to future accomplishments. Our society cannot afford schools or teachers that allow avoidable frustration and failures in the classroom. It cannot continue instructional strategies that place educational and emotional blockages in the paths of students.

Cognitive and Affective Domain

Many teachers have seen their instructional tasks primarily related to the cognitive domain of the child. They have rightly viewed the knowing, understanding and thinking capacities of the child as an important part of their task. The cognitive domain, as important as it may be, is not the total task of the teacher. The child has feelings, emotions and values that have a great influence on the activities in which the child will choose to participate. A teacher involved in reading instruction in an open classroom will be concerned with what is happening in the affective domain as well as the cognitive.

Each child has feelings and emotions that cluster around the activities of his life. If these feelings are positive and the child is able to integrate pleasure with a significant number of his encounters in reading, he will develop values about reading that will reinforce his continued efforts. If he meets with unrealistic expectations, frustrations, failures, and a general lack of positive reinforcements, his feelings, emotions, and values associated with reading will not support the continued interest and motivation in this ego-deflating activity.

[4]Glasser, William, Schools Without Failure, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1969 Chapter I.

The teacher must be concerned with the way the child receives and reacts to the instruction affectively. If the child is turned off to reading by the way that instruction is carried out, no matter what the child's intellectual abilities may be, we have created a reading problem for that child. A teacher who is truly following the philosophy of open education will not create learning blockages for children by ignoring the affective domain.

Mainstreaming: A New Legal Classification in The Open Concept Education Index

by

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Without added training, regular classroom teachers are getting back the handicapped children from the Special Education Classroom. PL94-142 requires schools to justify why any handicapped child isn't in the regular classroom. Throughout the nation one can hear classroom teachers in panic about it. Some teachers say they'll just quit: they feel that teacher accountability, minimal competency testing, growing classroom sizes, and inflation are enough. Mainstreaming handicapped kids back into over-crowded regular classroom is their last straw! Other teachers are hurrying back to the University for a quick course on the exceptional child. Some school corporations are providing in-service programs on the education of handicapped children. Teachers are picking up some ideas of what many of those special education terms really mean. Education journals carry recent articles on mainstreaming, and publishers have a steady order for mainstreaming handyman books. Undoubtedly, there will soon appear doctoral dissertations proving that regular classroom teachers feel unprepared for mainstreaming at the .01 level of significance (using the Spearman formula, of course).

With a few exceptions, it should be obvious that regular classroom teachers don't feel at all confident about their readiness for mainstreaming. One of those exceptions is the teachers who understand open concept education. For years now, the open concept educators have accepted the premise that equal education does not equate with identical education. PL94-142 doesn't appear to require much new for the open concept teachers. It does mandate Open Concept Education.

Mainstreaming mandates the placement of handicapped children in the least restrictive possible educational setting. Open concept educators are familiar with continuous progress curriculum. Mainstreaming requires initial and continuous diagnostic-prescriptive instructional objectives. Open concept educators are utilizng individualized criterion testing and behavioral objectives. Mainstreaming requires teacher flexibility in methods and management of learning activities. Open concept teachers have long accepted the responsibility for recognizing that there is no one proven learning style capable of fitting all children. Mainstreaming requires alternatives in learning materials, facilities, equipment, and resources. Open concept education has lead the field in experimenting with multipurpose environments and resources. Mainstreaming requires periodic conferencing with teachers, parents, administrators, pupils, and consultants. Non-gradedness, team teaching, and team planning programs are commonly identified with open concept education.

In short, there are so many parallels between mainstreaming concepts and open concept education that it is difficult to identify any significant differences. Without any stretching of imagination, mainstreaming is actually a new synonym for open concept education. Open concept education is an experienced pattern for regular teachers seeking techniques for accommodating mainstreaming requirements.

Open concept education is a philosophy, an attitude, and precipitated strategies for meeting individual pupil needs. It is a conversion of standards for fitting pupils into one model or method to accomplish educational goals. Our experience with open concept education predicts that pupils can learn as much basic education more happily in flexible, regular classroom environments as the same pupil can in a more restrictive setting. Mainstreaming seeks the same results for handicapped children by Congressional order.

Realistically, we realize that not all teachers easily adapt to the demands of open concept education. Those same teachers will likely be among the groups resisting mainstreamed education. Teachers are individuals too, but Congressional action has clearly found it necessary to redefine the role expectancy of regular classroom teachers to include a responsibility for added flexibility. Open concept education was not forced upon schools by law. Mainstreaming is a mandate requiring open concept education. Open concept education didn't require all schools in the nation to adopt flexible processing of curriculum goals, but mainstreaming does. Herein lies the major impact of PL94-142; mainstreaming mandates open concept education. It's no longer an alternative by choice for schools. Consequently, the patterns of open concept education are an invaluable resource to today's education. The new child called mainstreaming gives open concept education a new role - that of being a model to all educators. It also places upon all educators the mandate to be mindful that the major criterion for compliance is the constitutional premise that U.S. education is an open concept. PL94-142 "merely" moved the texts on identical education from the history classification to the category of fiction, according to the Library of Congress.

The Open Teacher

by

Glen J. Brown
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Indiana State University

and

Stanley J. Gross
Professor of Education
Indiana State University

No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge.

Kahlil Gibran

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary has approximately two pages of fine print dealing with the word open. The term open precedes many other words to expand their meaning. The range is from open-air, through open-sesame, to open-work; but fails, alas, to include open teacher. It seemed logical at this point to resort to the Dictionary of Education. A quick check of the copyright shows 1945 with renewal in 1973. Open-air class, open classroom,..., to open-window ventilation, but, still, no open teacher! But, surely, the Eric Thesaurus will be helpful. The most recent issue, October 1978, includes open education, open framework and open plan schools, but no open teacher. Perhaps--it could be listed under "teacher, open"? Not even there, we discover, but surely somewhere. How about the library card index? In round numbers, perhaps 75 cards deal with "Open Plan Schools." The elusive, mythical open teacher is, evidently, located somewhere in all those references. To somewhat remedy this gap in the literature we will describe the characteristics of the open teacher based upon a brief review of the literature and from our experiences as facilitators of learning groups.

Beliefs

Dr. Milton Rokeach (1960), a recognized authority on the belief-disbelief systems of people, would probably define the open teacher as:

> the extent to which the person (teacher) can receive, evaluate, and act on relevant information received from the outside on its own intrinsic merits, unencumbered by irrelevant factors in the situation arising from within the person or from the outside (p. 19).

Rokeach says that the closed person depends on authority for beliefs and disbeliefs, whereas, the open person (while not discounting authority), can see and hear other possibilities in the situation. The open teacher would be able to explore several alternatives for action within self, and thus, with students. This teacher would be a facilitator of learning as opposed to merely a transmitter of knowledge, and would presume the learner's right and competence to make important decisions. Mutual support and cooperation, aids to decision-making, would be highly valued and operationalized by the open teacher. The open teacher would facilitate the learning of cooperation skills in the learning process.

Leslie Hart in his book How the Brain Works (1975), clearly supports the openness perspective. He states "...a child is born motivated to learn, ... (p. 34)" just as a seed is programmed to produce a specific color, fruit, height, etc. Environment either allows the seed to grow naturally, or inhibits its growth (p. 34). Learning is a high priority human need. Learning is as natural as breathing and eating. The brain needs a rich, dynamic environment in which to function. Hart further supports this when he states "to make a decision in the true sense of thinking requires taking in enough information through receptors to permit recognizing or classifying the situation, and then ordering a course of action (p. 37)." The brain develops at a snail's pace if the learning environment is suitable only to snails.

Most of us in education learned that "a child's attention span is short." Not so, says Hart along with Piaget, and other perceptual field theorists. A child's attention span is often short where the teacher and the environment are closed to the fact that motivation is intrinsic and ever present. Thus the open teacher knows that a rich and dynamic environment for learning is a must if the child is to fully develop.

Choice

What makes an exciting environment for learning? We believe the presence of real choices makes the difference between lively and dull learning environments. Children, however, must attend school, there is no real choice here. Further, students in the traditional school have very few curricular decisions to make. Their choice is often much like they face when watching television, to passively receive or to turn it off. The open teacher, on the other hand, values greater choice. In addition, to be real choices, available means are actual options for action with sufficient information about them so that students know about the opportunity. Knowing beforehand about the probable consequences of choosing is essential if people are to learn to live with the impact of their choices. Otherwise, it is easy to disown responsibility for the decision. If choice is seen in this way, it is an alternative to paternalism, coercion, and alienation. Arranging these conditions poses some problems for the open teacher, but the consequences are evident in the relationship with students. We have seen this excitement about learning and the sense in their choices when learners are treated as persons who take responsibility for their own growth, who know what they need, and what is best for them. They had to perceive that they were

genuinely free to choose and knew about their options in the way we have indicated. We have also experienced situations where these conditions were not true and the outcome was evident in the bored, passive, bland, dependent, and/or hostile behavior of learners.

Problems for the teacher include having the imagination and courage to identify and provide real choices, some of which may be marginally acceptable with regard to school norms: being open enough personally to respect and withhold premature judgment about the varieties of ways students choose to actualize their choices, knowledge enough beforehand about the choices available to present helpful information about them to the students, and being confident enough as a choice maker to be genuinely supportive of students in this process.

A climate open for choice by learners will also provide aid in the form of emotional support and necessary physical resources. The presence of emotional support and physical resources in the open classroom sends a message to learners that choosing is genuinely valued in the setting. It follows that such a climate needs to be valued by school administrators, policy makers, and the community so that the physical resources are indeed available, and the teacher is supported so that he can be supportive of his students.

Abraham Maslow (1971) in his last book, The Farther Reaches of Human Nature, postulates that it is an aspect of the nature of man (the brain) to be dissatisfied (searching). In his chapter, "Low Grumbles, High Grumbles and Meta Grumbles," he states one can pretty well diagnose the state of the person by what the person is grumbling about. For example, of grumbling about food, clothing, and shelter one is concerned with basic biological needs, however, if the grumbling is about the quality of higher education programs in the United States, then the organism is at a higher need state than the previous example. The open teacher would perceive through meaningful dialogue (and formal diagnostic tools) with the learner the present threshold of learning and help provide challenging options for the learner. The teacher and student (also student and student) act as barometers for each other through their meaningful feedback to each other.

The brain operates somewhat like a radar system. The perceptors (senses) are extensions of the brain and are always searching (learning) and forming percepts from the learning environment. Feedback loops (identifying dilemmas, taking action, receiving feedback, and conceptualizing learning) are essential to the progress of the learner. In a rich, open, and dynamic classroom under the guidance of an open teacher, this process is maximized.

The open teacher also believes that students learn from each other; that students are available to each other as a rich part of the learning environment. We do not see any virtue in chaos, although the open teacher might appear to the less open observer as promoting such. The open teacher hears more sounds and sees more physical movement than the traditional teacher. We have often observed in our work, for example, that people who move with greater ease physically also appear to be moving more rapidly psychologically, and are more open to new experiences. They appear to be greater risk takers as perceived by the non-movers.

The open teacher is facilitative of risk-taking as a valued way of learning. This does not mean the open teacher is foolish about the risks he supports to take. The open teacher is knowledgeable and astutely sensitive to the prevailing social and political norms of the school-community. The open teacher begins where the learner, school, and community are and sensitively works toward the goal of greater openness, one step at a time. Outside (and inside) pressure groups must be clearly understood, and yet at the same time, meaningful dialogue must occur.

Who is the open teacher? A person who knows self and is highly knowledgeable of how people learn. A person who is aware of prevailing social and political norms and values in the school-community and through meaningful dialogue works at the cutting edge of bringing about change toward greater openness. One who believes in and values the contributions of each and every person in the learning process. The open teacher is proactive, adaptive, a creative problem-solver, an implementer, a facilitator, a diffuser, an innovator, directed from within, trusting and trusted, expects the best from self and others, demands the best from self and others, and enjoys. This person is high in empathy, commitment, security, and intimacy and is self-rewarded through the success of the learner--the teacher's reason for being in the first place!

We believe that a teacher so defined is necessary to make open concept buildings and curriculums a reality in the experience of the learner. Perhaps when that is a reality our perusal of dictionaries and card catalogues will be more quickly rewarded.

> If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.
>
> Kahlil Gibran

Footnotes

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Some Thoughts by an Administrator of an Open Concept School

by

Burnie Cerra, Principal

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An experience of open concept education can be as exhilarating or as devastating as the people guiding the program. It can open children's minds - challenge traditional methods - develop self-reliance and responsibility within children. It can fail due to lack of accountability. It can fail without proper controls. It can fail because philosophy and goals of staff vary.

When we open a system to its most positive potential, we must be aware that we also open up everyone to the opposite of that continuum. Therein lies the challenge, the excitement and the need for intelligent controls.

As an administrator of an open concept school which stressed individualized learning, the writer found the existence of self-competitiveness to be the most unique and rewarding quality in children. Students would strive to be better because they wanted to be. They desired more knowledge, more accomplishments, and more successes. Their ability to evaluate and understand their own growth was often awesome. In research conducted by Indiana State University, our students were significantly different in one specific area. Their contact and interchange with adults showed no sign of fear or inhibition. The data results concluded that this occurrence expressed "the whole child" concept, in which a child is confident of his own abilities.

We generally define "whole child" by academic growth, social maturity, psychological well-being, and physical capabilities. The possibility of achieving this goal with children is real. Of extreme importance is the ability of the adults to steer away from the competition between children activities, and set their sights on self-discipline, responsibility, and the freedom to make choices.

The writer does, however, caution those who wish to "try" open concept learning to set some guidelines for the establishment of such a program. These guidelines also illustrate areas where "devastation" can occur.

1. The staff must be permitted to choose in terms of each one's involvement. One unhappy staff member can take the school to the other end of the continuum.

2. The administrator should be a flexible, facilitative individual. Change is an inherent quality of open-concept as it is processed. Rigidity will kill the process.

3. Scheduling should be planned and adhered to, but capable of being changed at a moments notice. Again, change must be accepted the way one accepts the change in weather patterns.

4. Parents should be allowed the option of having their children attend. The basic thought: It is difficult (but not impossible) for parents to allow their children experiences which they themselves have never experienced. Recommendation: Include parents.

5. Communication and accountability are the two single most important elements of an open environment. They must be on-going, open, clear, and intelligent.

Questions which must be continually asked:

How does the parents "know" the child is learning?

How do you justify "working at one's own pace?"

6. Materials should be varied and of excellent quality. Good reference materials are mandatory.

The basic philosophy: The child is a valid person. The adult is a valid person. Neither one runs the other's life. The adult sets standards and values, limits and expectations, AND THEN within that framework, the student begins to make his or her choices. The framework broadens as the ability to handle choices broadens. This is growth. This is becoming a person. This is learning. This is what "open concept" can be in our children's lives, as well as in our own.

Toward An Existential Methodology

In The Language Arts

by

Russell Hamm
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The use of the word toward in the title of this article is intential. There can be no true existential methodology, because as a theory it is so personal and idiosyncratic. It is no small matter that in existential methodology that learning is accentuated rather than teaching, that the student is active rather than passive, that the focus is on the person rather than a class.

Perhaps the greatest flaw in "open education," which may or may not have as its assumptional posture an existential theory, is the drive toward closure, a model. There are degrees of openness, or freedom. And each person in "teaching," in life must reckon how much freedom he or she can live with, how much risk is endurable--and this is related to each unique person's perception.

Having succinctively outlined the author's stance - perhaps far too briefly, then what are the implications for practice, for methodology.

Hand writing: What is more personal, more an expression of self than the way one writes. Rather than trying to make a child conform to an a priori standard such as the Palmer method, why not let the child improve his own way of writing, i.e., from what it is to what he would like it to be. How does one go about this: Let the child discover that legibility, readability improves as there is consistency in letter size, patterning. The aesthetics of writing is the persons. Writing is a way of relating to others--intimate, personal.

Spelling: Does it not make sense to learn to spell those words that are in the individual's writing vocabulary. Because we are individuals, we have chosen certain words to make our own: Should we not learn to spell these words, rather than the Thorndike list of most commonly misspelled words by the larger community--"the generalized other." How does one go about this: By integrating spelling with the larger curriculum; by letting the child keep his own spelling list; by appropriating from his paragraphs in language arts and social studies those words that cause trouble for him. The children have to recognize for themselves the importance of correct spelling; spelling, too, is communication with others.

Paragraph or theme writing: Writing should not be isolated from experience. The child should be able to write from his own point of view. I've used some of the following techniques:

A. Ask a child to come to the front of the room. Blindfold him. Ask another child to come forward. Can the blindfolded person identify the other child by touching the face? Ask the child what kind of nose? Describe the hair. Encourage the child to give specific, graphic descriptors. The writing "assignment" might be to write a paragraph to describe another child so well that he or she can quickly be identified.

B. Have the children close their eyes. Ask them if they are now more aware of senses other than sight. What do you hear now? Smell? Taste? Touch? The writing "assignment" might be to write how their world would change if they were a blind person.

C. Talk about the eight parts of speech. What are perhaps the two most important ones? The pronoun can be substituted for the noun. The adjective adds to the noun. The adverb adds to the verb. Conjunctions and prepositions are connections. An interjection is emotion. Perhaps the noun and verb are the two most important parts of speech. Discuss different kinds of talking verbs, walking verbs. What are different words that can substitute for boy or girl? The writing "assignment" might be to write an entire story just using nouns (pronouns) and verbs. It's not easy.

D. In writing a paragraph on a theme, let the child write down his thoughts in "white heat" not worrying about spelling, capitalization . . . because in second draft or third draft, the student can incorporate spelling, handwriting . . . and most importantly keep a file on each student's work . . . so that student can evaluate his or her progress . . . the child must be aware of what his or her unique problems are.

Poetry: Start where the child is--with verse or worse. See if the children can translate into words, nonsense or otherwise, the music of some sound like pigeon sounds, traffic sounds, i.e., let them write a verse . . . and start with fun things that children can relate to. Ignore rhyme in the beginning. In the middle school years "Casey at the Bat" and "The Owl and the Pussy Cat" are the kind of "literature" that "turns kids on." Read aloud. Verse and poetry come alive as they are orally expressed. Poetry is a way of noting that persons communicate with the entire body--the hands, the face--that words become even more personal as they are spoken.

Reading: To be blunt: How can a classroom of 25-30 students have individualized reading instruction? There is a half-way house: Intra-class grouping. Not mockingbirds, bluebirds, and turtles, but flexible groups where similar interests (or problems) of children are matched. Anything to get them "hooked" on reading. Why must everyone read the same short story, the same novel, the same textbook. In small groups, reading can be a sharing adventure. (Incidentally I was "taught" to read by a peer, not a teacher.)

Telling stories, reading stories can light candles. If a child is interested in baseball, let him read baseball . . . if it is bugs, let him read bugs. Using newspapers in the classroom can be very effective; they are here and now. Downplay book reports, encourage free reading--free reading with feedback.

It's not nice to say this, but a few boys are not physiologically mature enough to read until as late as the third grade. And you can't make them do something they can't do. And many boys learn to hate reading, hate school . . . important as reading is in the primary grades . . . the child learns to dislike reading if he or she is forced, pressured, segregated, remediated, and intimidated. Create a climate of getting the student ready for reading, wanting to read.

Speaking: It is not necessary for a child to go to the front of the room to make a formal speech in order to develop oral communicative skills. If the teacher's questioning technique focuses on opening-up discussion, rather than getting a specific answer, the speaking skills can grow. For example: How do you react to snakes, Mary? vs. Mary, what are the poisonous snakes in Indiana. The first question encourages reaction, discussion, the second question is one of knowing or not knowing. Courtesy and respect can develop to the point that hand-raising becomes obsolete. Fear of speaking before the class can become just the opposite -- fun.

Listening: Ever try this: "I'm going to intentially make mistakes in spelling, in pronunciation or whatever, and I'm going to see how alert you are to discover my mistakes!"

Or use conundrums such as: $1 + 7 \div 2 \times 3$, etc. Not for mental discipline but checking on concentration.

Or in medius res of conversation or discussion some instruction or direction by the teacher to see how many students are alert.

If a teacher is committed to working toward an existential methodology, new paths are opened. Each teacher as learner must try what seems appropriate for that specific human climate. And what "works" once does not become sacrosanct.

An existential methodology does not mean being irresponsible by saying: What'll we do today? Rather it means planning classes with persons in mind rather than primarily planning the content to be mastered. The how is as important as the what. Plans have specifics and alternatives. But every class, every day, the teacher must re-examine and start afresh! We cannot put our foot in the same stream twice.

Social Studies in Open Education

by

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Introduction

Open education is an alternative program to traditional education and is not intended to replace traditional programs now in effect. Successful teachers using formal approaches in the classroom and modifying these techniques with individual, creative thoughts and new approaches are continually gaining satisfactory results in teaching. Replacement of the present system with another approach to education can be most helpful, particularly with programs related to elementary education. Many of the ideas used in open education originated with John Dewey, the British Open School, the Froebel Institute in England, and countless other noteworthy institutions.[1]

A newcomer to the open classroom is frequently impressed with the abundance of materials and variety of activities used in this approach to teaching. Openness, like freedom, is not restricted but is it clearly planned and functional in all aspects? John U. Thomas, an early writer in this area, suggests that this concept of education contains six operational functions:

(1) The classroom's physical environment

(2) the time allocated for the activities taking place in the environment

(3) the nature of the activities that occur

(4) the materials utilized

(5) the relationships between the teachers and pupils

(6) the association of pupils with pupils.[2]

The open classroom by the diversification of different activities hopes to free children from the pressure imposed by the fixed curriculum, regulated programs, and restricted movement. This program hopes to enhance what children can do by themselves rather than what is traditionally done for them. A goal of this program is to capitalize on the child's honesty, his inquisitive nature, his initiative, his independence, and resourceful capabilities. The provision for more learning room in this experience enables students to explore, stretch and expand their learning experiences, thereby lessening the pressure of restricted movement and initiative. This program also enhances the positive relationship between the teacher and the children involved. The personal contact is increased and enhances the goodwill between the child and teacher. Most persons familiar with the concept feel that the more trusting the learning situation can be effected, the higher the pupil is likely to think of himself.[3]

Other persons working in the area of open education see the child clearly affected by security, affection, encouragement, goals, learning skills, and discipline. Security in the child arises from trust; however, the pupil should always realize that certain standards are expected of him in the learning process and this thought must be constantly reinforced in the school experience. Parents and teachers share an equal resposibility for affection. Hopefully, the child will never be in doubt about the teacher's sincere affection for him. Also important is the child's need for esteem and approval of his peer group. Perhaps the most important aspect of this portion of the educational effort is honesty. If the teacher and child can develop a truly honest feeling of respect and understanding, other relationships fall more easily in place. The teacher's need to constantly encourage the child is basic to the teaching day. This can be done in a variety of ways, ranging from sincere individual attention, when needed, to promoting the pupil's need for leadership in peer group situations in social studies as well as other academic experiences. Pupils' goals may be enhanced by recognizing individual differences among children, the careful building of self confidence with each child, and raising of individual standards, both personal and academic. Learning skills are perhaps best enhanced by open education; much time will be given to the subject later in this study. However, it may be said that learning is a sharing activity and pupils should be encouraged to record their findings, share with others, and work together in the school setting. Finally, discipline is not an absent ingredient in open education. Self discipline is certainly a primary goal in this approach to learning. Responsibility, honesty, trust and persistence; all play a vital role in helping the child achieve a high degree of self discipline.[4]

The Social Studies Learning Centers

Working together is a basic skill in social studies, if a student is going to work effectively to cope with his social environment. Learning centers for social studies can easily provide experiences that will promote these basic skills. Also, the learning center can be geared to meet varied student abilities without social or intellectual stigma attached. Thus, one can surmise the learning center for any academic subject is one of the vital aspects of open education, and in the area of social studies, learning centers lend themselves so easily to open education. Being able to gear instruction at the level desired also promotes social understanding and positive attitudes toward all members of the world community.[5]

An integral part of the social studies learning center is the teaching-learning student contract. Individual instruction can well be served by this approval to learning. When a learning contract is introduced in an elementary school program, it is essential to meet with the student to discuss the tasks to be performed. The teacher should go over the contract step-by-step, and encourage comments and questions on the part of the student. After this preliminary session, the students are encouraged to move around the room and investigate the materials that have been deposited at the various centers. Once they have made a decision as to which center to work, the children then discuss the tasks among themselves, with teacher concurrence, and then decide how to accomplish the contract task. The students, with teacher approval,

then consider alternate approaches to each task and establish their final strategy for learning. Thus, even before work is started in the social studies center, the pupils have had practice in the skills of decision-making and cooperation. As they form learning teams and approach the tasks, the children learn how to better work together toward a common goal. Cooperating and also allowing for individual differences, they learn to understand the teacher as a resource person. As the teacher assesses the role of tutor and evaluator, it naturally follows for the teacher more easily sees the individual needs of each child.[6]

In most areas of social studies, an interest center can be used to introduce a unit and thereby motivate learning. This procedure is most effective if the purpose is for the children to identify goals. Maps and realia of the country, state or area under study can be displayed in a corner, along the wall, as well as using the bulletin board. Ample time should be allowed for the pupils to browse and study the material being displayed. As the children explore the items on display, the teacher should make notes regarding the questions being asked during this period. These questions can be written on slips of paper or on the chalkboard. Later, the children meet in a discussion group and organize the questions around common topics. Then, the students select the topics or areas they choose to study. By this method, pupils with mutual interests form a learning team. Work areas are then selected and research and study thus begin. Working together, the members of each team draw up a plan on how they will approach the study problem. They will also consider how to present the information obtained by their study. The teacher can encourage divergent thinking by listening to different ways under discussion and help the pupils develop study and reporting procedures in the tasks under way.[7]

Teachers do not always feel comfortable in the role of resource person. Frequently a teacher may want to play a more active role in identifying objectives and designing classroom activities regarding learning activities. This does not envision that more teacher direction changes the thrust of individual child initiative in learning.[8]

In setting up, the social studies learning centers would vary with each social studies unit of study. The entire room might reflect the social studies unit and children would be directed to different centers with different activities involved. If, for example, Japan were being studied, there would be a variety of activities concerned with this country. The teacher could introduce the unit by the study of maps to recognize the various islands of Japan. At this introductory point centers could be introduced to show the use of the globe, with Japan clearly seen in this perspective. Another center could be concerned with the basic islands and the contour of the land. This could be used with a center showing products of Japan and highlighting where each product originated by use of various maps and learning projects. Another center might emphasize various cities and different ways of life from the northern to southern islands.

After the children become comfortable with their knowledge of location, products and skills, etc., another phase of unit learning might develop. The centers could be changed to emphasize the social and historical aspects of the people. Centers could be arranged to focus upon the Japanese festivals, religious viewpoints and ceremonies, sports and history of the nation. The children might construct various buildings found in Japan, lanterns used in the country, draw reproductions of flags, and sing songs related to Japan. The use of resource people could be very helpful to further enhance the knowledge of the Japanese people.[9]

In the final phase of the unit on Japan, a third set of learning centers might be called upon. At this point, the emphasis would be on finalizing the learning activities. An arts and craft center could be put into operation thereby giving the children an opportunity to construct various objects of a simple nature that would be central to the Japanese way of life. Various objects used in cooking, fishing, travel, home decoration, etc. could be taught in this center. Another center might feature books concerning all aspects of life in this oriental country. This literature center could show how Japan became an industrial power and highlight the ties binding our two countries. Other centers might finalize learning of the arts of the country, thereby helping children better appreciate the music, poetry, literature, and art work of the nation and understanding Japan in a total and realistic fashion. Many teachers have found the use of a history center advantageous, using time lines and simple devices to finalize learning about the country being studied. In addition to time lines, textbooks, role playing and drama give the children added insight into these studies and centers involving drama can be most effective in culminating learning programs.

It must be obvious to the reader that learning centers in open education can be used in countless ways. It is the teacher's plans, along with the children's interest and involvement that dictate the extent of each program.

Evaluation is probably the most difficult part of the learning center and associated independent study programs. Positive results are obvious in the fact that learning centers, independent studies, and instructional resource centers are increasing markedly throughout the nation. Expanded libraries, utilizing and supporting these programs, additions to school buildings, remodeling and building new facilities with these teaching techniques in mind are also increasing each year. However, ordinary evaluative instruments do not seem to be able to adequately measure the total progress of these programs. One of the tools used to evaluate learning centers and independent study is known as the Attitude Survey. This instrument is used on a one-to-one basis between the teacher and the student. With this survey, an attempt is made to obtain the feelings of the child in regard to learning centers and these instructional procedures. Other systems of evaluating pupil progress are based upon similar behaviors indicated in terms of the goals identified with each learning center. Walter Johnson and Anne Kennard have worked in this area of evaluation along with Richard Bodine and Gary Lonnon. Most researchers will agree that much progress in independent study programs needs to be made; but enough evidence exists to indicate that these techniques with modifications and improvements will likely continue and grow in use in the years to come.[10]

SUMMARY

As the teacher considers making a transition from traditional teaching programs in social studies to more individualized techniques, the following points originated in substance by John E. Morlan may be considered:

(1) As much freedom as possible should be given to students in selection of educational tasks and use of materials.

(2) The teacher should attempt to allow the pupils as much freedom of movement and communication as possible, commensurate with good discipline procedures, and varied with the changing school environment.

(3) Schedules and contracts should be realistically conceived so that the children may study and progress in areas of interest and academic need.

(4) Assignments should be always open-ended to encourage and facilitate in-depth study.

(5) Whenever possible, let the children check their work and evaluate themselves so that immediate feedback on learning is available to the pupil and teacher.

(6) Develop a system of records that serves the need of both the teacher and the learner.

(7) Attempt always to instill in the classroom strong motivational stimuli that constantly interests and encourages the students to pursue their growing academic and social understanding.

(8) Make all attempts possible to frequently confer with students on an individual basis to emphasize the personalized instructional progress."

NOTES

[1]Joseph D. Hassett and Arline Weisberg. Open Education: Alternatives Within our Tradition (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), pp 4-8.

[2]John U. Thomas. Learning Centers: Opening Up the Classroom (Boston: Holbrook Press, Inc., 1975), p. 4.

[3]Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[4]Lesly P. Gingell. The ABC's of the Open Classroom. (Homewood, Illinois: ETC Publications, 1973), pp. 13-20.

[5]Tom Davison, et.al. The Learning Center Book: An Integrated Approach. (Santa Monica, California: Goodyear Publishing Company, Inc., 1976), p. 117.

[6]John E. Morlan, et.al. Classroom Learning Centers: Individualized, Personalized Instruction, (Belmont, California: Fearon Publishers, 1974), p. 135.

[7]Ibid, p. 136.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Gingell, Op cit., pp. 131-132.

[10]Joyce Fern Glasser. The Elementary School Learning Centers... for Independent Study, (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Co., Inc., 1971), pp. 163-188.

[11]Morlan, Op cit., pp. 159-160.

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Freedom, Authority, Early Childhood and Open Education

by

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Open education is often characterized as education in which the classroom environment is planned to allow the flexibility to meet students' individual needs. Teachers retain the freedom to plan instructional strategies and styles which coincide with their values. Ideally the open education settings reflect little which would support attitudes of conforming, overdependence, rigidity, and authoritarianism.

Yet, as many early childhood classrooms are observed and evaluated, a vast spectrum of educational settings can be found. There are many classrooms in which the "authority-oriented" teachers teach content which is pre-determined and set. In contrast there are, in other classrooms, teachers whose values and teaching styles reflect freedom and whose classrooms allow the learner to choose the curriculum to be included.

If the label "open education" is associated with these teachers and with classrooms so entirely different from one another, how is the prospective teacher or the teacher being retrained for early childhood to know what open education really is or should be?

Higher education institutions often afford prospective teachers the opportunity to learn what Ryle in The Concept of Mind[1] calls knowing that, or verbal knowledge, and knowing how, or performative knowledge. Many times when information is presented about open education, an inference is made which points to one style of teaching and one type of environment as a model open education classroom. When a prospective teacher observes an open education classroom which reflects few characteristics of the model classroom, the knowing that and knowing how provide little help.

The prospective teacher must develop criteria for analyzing classroom environments and teaching styles. Also, teachers must be capable of identifying their own values and must reflect the ability to adapt them to the style learning environment best suited for maximizing education for young children.

The following diagram depicts four basic types of classroom structures that can be used in analyzing the degree of openness and the quality of teacher-child relationships that exist under the aegies of open education.

[1] Ryle, Gilbert. The Concept of Mind (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1949).

	Learning Centered Classroom	Content Centered Classroom
Open	I Freedom-Oriented Activities	II Freedom/Authority
Non-Open	III Authority/Freedom	IV Authority-oriented

The open classroom with learning centers and a freedom-oriented teacher is a classroom in which the teacher values the development of the total child and places limited controls on the child. The teacher's interaction with the child, and the environment, encourage the development of problem-solving skills through smelling, tasting, feeling, and seeing materials.

The second quadrant points to a teacher who is still an open, accepting person but to an environment which places more constraints on children's interactions with one another and with materials. The teacher moves the children from learning center to learning center, defining the expected outcomes and often directing activities. This teacher is an open freedom-oriented person who considers children as receptive learners dependent on external motivation to learn.

The teacher described in the third quadrant appears to reflect characteristics which allow for a fully functioning open education environment. This teacher establishes a learner-centered environment which would allow for opportunities to investigate and develop problem-solving skills, but the teacher fails to interact with children in a manner to maximize learning. A "hands off" approach, often found in this style of teaching, produces a confusing and sometimes "confused bedlam" classroom.

Described in the fourth quadrant, the authoritarian teacher develops a classroom environment designed to be orchestrated by the teacher. Children are likely to find few opportunities to investigate materials, to interact with peers, ask questions, or move about with any kind of freedom. The teacher sees children as receptive learners and the environment as a tool to promote maximum learning. Although labeled "open education" this classroom shows little evidence that much freedom or openness is taking place.

Perhaps developing frameworks for analyzing teachers and classrooms such as the one above will provide new teachers and teachers being retrained in early childhood with methods for assessing their own teaching values and styles. By estalishing criteria for assessment, these teachers can best develop teaching styles and plan learning environments which exemplify their values. Open education in the broadest interpretation may or may not provide the framework best suited for a particular teacher's values. In developing and assessing values and evaluating teaching styles and environments, new and prospective teachers will be faced with finding answers to questions about open education which could include:

1. Are there circumstances in open education in which limited freedom yields more positive results for young children?

2. Are there identifiable conditions which point to the positive effects of both freedom-and authority-oriented conditions within the same classroom?

3. Are the teacher's values of freedom or authority being modeled by the young children enrolled in the classroom as they interact with peers or relate to others?

BOY SCOUTS AND TEACHER EDUCATION

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A recent trend in teacher education programs involves the utilization of the community as a learning laboratory for teacher candidates. In addition to increasing potential employment possibilities for the surplus of trained teachers and remediating some of the university's retrenchment problems, the use of the community logically provides some other advantages. First, teachers who are familiar with community resources are more inclined to use them in connection with their planned classroom activities. Second, many community organizations offer comprehensive educational programs that are worthy of investigation and may serve as an instructional model.

Several community programs provide excellent opportunities for laboratory experiences for teaching candidates. Among these are park and recreation programs, YMCA, YWCA, 4-H, scouts, migrant programs, planned parenthood, family services, churches, smoking clinics, or mental health clinics. Although each of these organizations, agencies, or institutions provide valuable educational programs and each is worthy of continued investigation, this writer will focus on only one program, the Boy Scouts. The intent is to encourage wider use of the community as the open classroom in teacher education and demonstrate the degree of sophistication that is available in at least one community-based instructional program.

The Boy Scout Instructional Program

The Boy Scouts of America has a unique instructional program. Teacher candidates who are given the opportunity to participate in an active troop will observe a quantity of educational theories in practice. The basic program has a built-in reinforcement system that involves the use of skill awards, merit badges, rank advancement, leadership opportunities and responsibilities, special recognitions, etc, (behavior modification). Boys wear uniforms that are adorned with recognition insignia for their accomplishments (self awareness). The scout is free to select areas of study for which he has a special interest (the open curriculum), but he also has specified criteria for attainment of objectives for each of these areas of study (competency-based philosophy). Most scout masters are not experts in these diverse curricular areas; they therefore call upon "outside experts" to provide additional instruction for their troop (community involvment). The scouts themselves provide some instruction and testing for each other (the old Lancastershire plan). Since the age-range for scouts in a troop is 11 to 21 (non-graded instruction), each boy advances through the curriculum at his own rate of speed (individualized study). Whenver possible, parents are recruited to assist in program planning and operations (parental involvement).

Learning Theory

The instructional strategies recommended by the national Boy Scouts of America organization are published and disseminated to all scoutmasters. The scoutmasters, as well as the leadership corps of the troop, experience training programs on learning theory and instructional strategies. Eight principles of learning advanced by the Boy Scout organization are given as follows:

1. Learners learn without teachers. All learners, from learning disabled to genius, learn more or less continuously. Teachers make the learning process more efficient, but they do not supplant natural learning.

2. Learning should be lifelike. The best learning occurs in life-like conditions. An individual learns to ride a bicycle by riding a bicycle. Similarly, a teacher learns to handle discipline problems by handling them. Lecture and reading may enhance the learning curve, but the further the learning is from the real thing, the more difficult it becomes.

3. Learners must be oriented. Learners need to know where they are and where they are heading in the learning process. If they inquire why they are studying a particular topic, then an oversight has been made in the instructional strategy. Learners should not be kept in the dark.

4. Learning occurs a piece at a time. An individual does not become an "expert" all at once. Instead he develops his skills, piece by piece, over a period of time.

5. Learning steps must occur logically. The way learning is sequenced makes a great deal of difference for a learner. In general, learning should be ordered to proceed from the known to the unknown, the familiar to the unfamiliar, or the easy to the difficult. For example, it is probably easier for an individual to learn to add before he learns to multiply.

6. Learners must be actively involved. A learner learns to swim by getting in the water. An individual learns citizenship by practicing it. Learning really occurs when the learners have the opportunity to "do" their learning.

7. Learners must know they are learning. If the learner knows what he must do to demonstrate attainment of learning, and if he is provided with the opportunity to test his skills periodically, he and his instructor will know he is progressing and both will therefore be reinforced. When he doesn't know he is learning, interest dims.

8. Learners learn individually. Individuals have different experiences and different rates of learning. No single method of instruction will serve every learner equally well.[1]

The learning theory identified above is sound and functional. It could serve with great utility as an instructional model in any teacher education program.

[1] _____, Scoutmaster's Handbook (North Brunswick, New Jersey: Boy Scouts of America, 1972), pp. 352-354.

Management of Learning

The Boy Scout organization also has prescribed the "ideal learning experience." The prescription has been named "management of learning," or just plain MOL. According to this prescription the ideal learning experience contains four essential ingredients which occur in repetitive fashion but in the following logical order.

1. Presentation. The learner receives input about his learning task. This generally occurs through demonstration, pictures, visual aids, etc. Unfortunately, this is where traditional instruction sometimes stops.

2. Directions. The learner is asked to respond to the presentation with a task that enables him to utilize the information covered in the presentation.

3. Active Response. The learner follows the directions given to him utilizing the skills given to him in the presentation.

4. Feedback. The learner finds out how well he utilized the given information. The feedback may come from testing, the instructor, a peer, or some other way.[2]

A basic rule for scoutmasters is prescribed by the Boy Scout organization states: "Never do anything for a boy that the boy can do for himself."[3] The scoutmaster is first of all a teacher, and the good scoutmaster, like the good teacher, is able to estimate accurately the ability of each boy and encourage him to take advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided for him.

The success of the scout program in building citizens is excellent. Few Eagle scouts fail to succeed in their chosen occupations. Teacher education candidates could prosper as a result of exposure to this program, and most local BSA councils will be willing to work with university programs to encourage observation and participation activities. Summer scouting programs could also solve many of the participation problems that sometimes confront summer school professors when schools are not in session.

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[2] Ibid, p. 355-356.

[3] Ibid, p. 12.

ROOTS OF SELF ESTEEM

by

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We are carefully taught that to be *someone* we must be competent and productive. Achievement must be visible. Colleen Hartry describes the moments in which she becomes aware of this value system and its transmission to children.

> I search my heart and memory for the beginning of the deeply held belief that if I was not actively productive in a way that was immediately visible - either in a paycheck, or a shiny floor or a possession - then I was somehow unworthy ... When Steve returned from school, I offered to play some of his games with him. He got out the games and I noticed immediately that everyone of them was somehow linked with achievement. How many points scored, words made, and in the least amount of time? And don't forget to keep score. So we are teaching it to them, too, I thought.[1]

What happens when we give "personal achievement" top priority in our lives?

Consequences

When our worth as a person becomes linked with performance, there is a need for constant success. There is a need for recognition. The three A's of personhood are achievement, achievement, achievement. But we can't always be successful! Achievement is relative and there are always severe limits to our ability to control events. As a result:

1. We see ourselves sometimes as winners, sometimes as losers. At times we feel "up", at times "down". Once the linkage is established between personal achievement and one's worth, life seems to alternate between ego inflation and deflation. We are never sure about our worth! There is always a question, a doubt about ourselves!

2. When the answer to the question "How am I doing?" is to any degree negative, there is a threat to our ego. We are apt to become defensive. Our energy becomes consumed in an effort to maintain our sense of worth rather than used to identify errors and mistakes. When we are absorbed in self oriented thinking, task oriented thinking becomes very difficult. Problem solving and learning come to a grinding halt.

3. When there is threat to our sense of worth, we become very anxious. There is stress.

The Alternative in Education

A sense of being someone occurs in our moments of success. It also occurs *if* we are able to participate in activities wherein there is expression of our unique human potentials. For instance many persons find problem solving intrinsically satisfying. Where is the error? What was the mistake? In this case, joy and a sense of worth come from an expression of our ability to learn. In a study of self actualizing people Maslow[2] found that these individuals were not concerned with self esteem. They did not question their worth. They were not defensive. They were absorbed in task oriented thinking rather than self oriented thinking. This seems to indicate that self expression is a root of self esteem.

The process of learning entails making mistakes. We constantly fall short of the mark. If mistakes and "shortcomings" are seen as reflections of personal inadequacy the energy of the person is consumed in ego defense rather than devoted to problem solving. Learning comes to a grinding halt. There is anxiety and stress. This situation can be avoided if *top priority* is given not to achievement but to participation in activities which provide for expression of our unique human potential.

The Problem

If we were *able* to involve students in activities which provide for self expression and actualization, our schools could become a seedbed of self esteem rather than a source of anxiety and stress. Our ability to so do depends upon the formulation of an adequate concept of human learning. We must become *aware* of the *characteristics* and *components* of activities which provide for self expression and actualization. The uniqueness of human learning is that it occurs in the context of a conceptual-linguistic environment. Within this dimension we must seek to *identify* and *describe* those learning *processes* which are related to problem solving and the reconstruction of experience. To find answers to these questions the context of inquiry must be in the *classroom*. We must formulate a model of human learning which will enable us to explain what happens in the classroom and to predict what may be the consequences of certain actions.

The involvement of students in activities which provide for self expression and actualization was a major goal of progressive education. Much of the talk about open education and humanistic education is an echo of this dream. Rearticulation of the goals of progressive education will not make the dream a reality. We need to complete th job of formulating a conception of education. We need a model of *what the process is!*

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An Open Education Classroom Strategy --

The Use of Learning Activity Packages

by

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WHAT IS IT?

A learning activity package is an educational tool designed to tell the user

(1) Why he is using it (rationale),
(2) Where he is going (objectives),
(3) How he can get there (package activities), and
(4) When he has arrived (accomplishment of the objectives).

Learning packages are labeled by many terms, such as LAPS, UNIPACS, and SELF-PACS. Basically the essential elements found in most types of learning packages are:

(1) Title of unit or package
(2) Overview or introduction
(3) Rationale or purpose
(4) Objectives in performance terms
(5) Pre-test
(6) List of specific and related reference materials
(7) Program of learning activities and strategies (This includes reading, listening, viewing, constructing, discussing, writing, etc.)
(8) Post evaluation
(9) Quest activities

WHY USE IT?

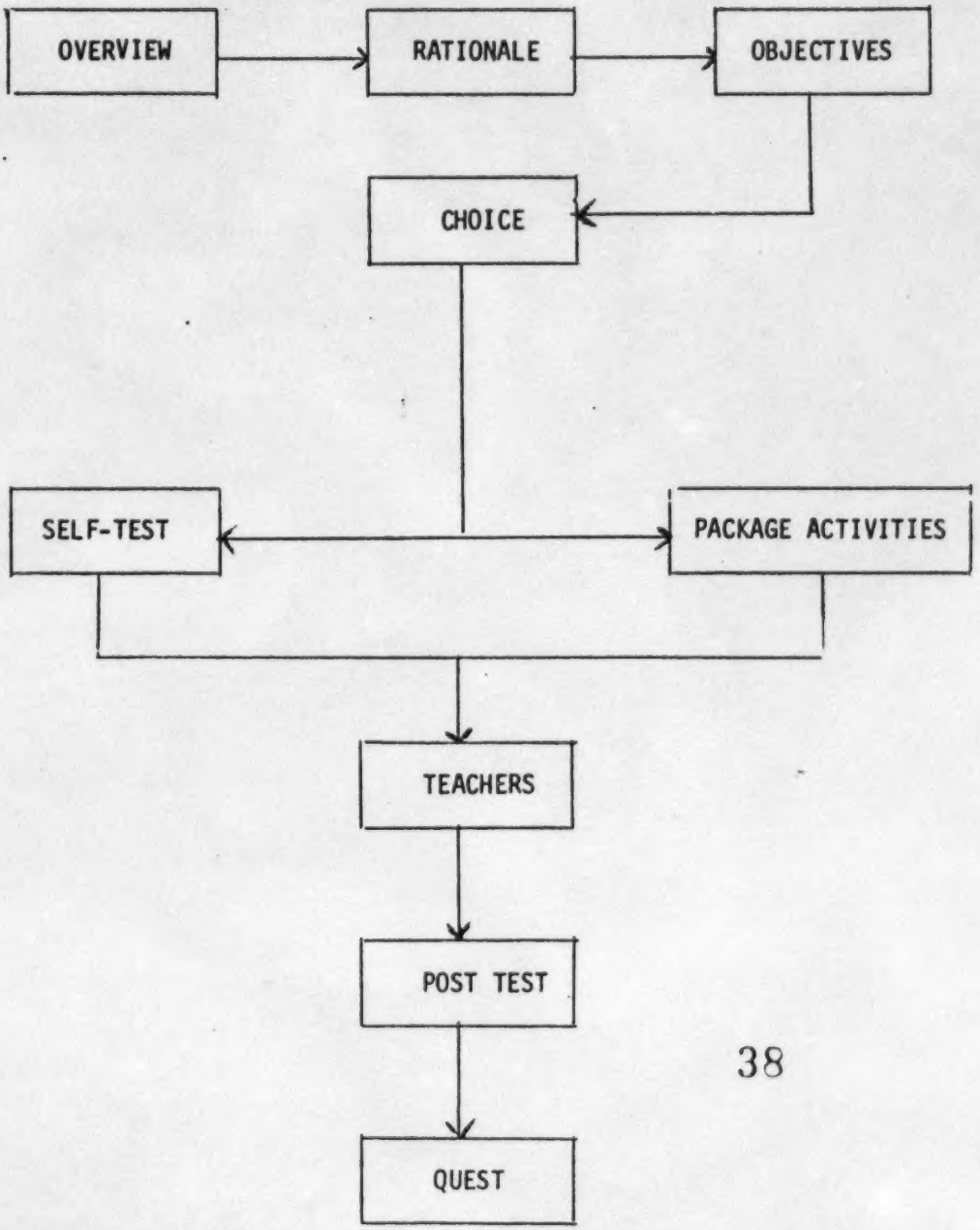
Experience indicates that learners react in a very positive manner to the utilization of this approach. The learner

(1) Knows why he is doing what he is doing.
(2) Knows exactly what is expected of him.
(3) May work at his own pace.
(4) Enjoys activity in his learning.
(5) Is motivated by variety in activities.
(6) Is challenged to move beyond the minimum requirements.
(7) Is not required to "re-learn" what he already knows.
(8) Knows when he has completed the objectives.

HOW IS IT USED?

The learning activity package may be used as the primary instructional tool in the classroom, as a remedial strategy in the classroom, as a supplementary activity in the classroom, or as an enrichment activity in the classroom.

The accompanying flow chart indicates the direction of the learner in using a learning package.



WHERE DO I GET IT?

Learning packages used by learners are primarily from three sources:

(1) Teacher made
(2) Commercially prepared
(3) Combination of the above

If the teacher prepares the learning package, the processes to be employed might be as follows:

(1) Select the concept around which the package is to be constructed.
(2) Define the aspects or topics to be developed. Usually these will determine the title of each section of the package.
(3) Select the materials which are appropriate for developing the concept for the level of the learners who will be using the package.
(4) Develop the overview and rationale for the package.
(5) Write the objectives in behavioral terms.
(6) Develop appropriate pre-test items to determine prior achievement of the objectives.
(7) Develop a variety of activities which the learner will use to develop the objectives.
(8) Construct post-evaluation items that will determine the mastery of the objectives of the learner.
(9) Organize and blend the above components into a harmonious learning package readable and understandable at the level of the intended learner.

Commercially prepared learning packages are available from several sources.

A combination of teacher prepared package and commercially prepared package may be utilized by a teacher, resulting in perhaps a more sophisticated and yet more practical package for the learner in a prescribed local setting.

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The Open Classroom in the High School: One Point Perspective

by

Robert O. Williams

The movement to open education and the open classroom left many high school teachers feeling like the poor child who always viewed the candy shop from the outside. It appeared to them that the movement held great promise for the elementary teacher. Articles on the theory and practice of the open classroom became plentiful, but much of the practice seemed to focus on the elementary school. Thus, the high school teacher found much to agree with in the theory of the open classroom, but little in the practice seemed to be applicable to the high school setting. How do I start? What should be my first step? What do I do next? The questions were endless and the problems created formidable barriers to the implementation of the open classroom, particularly in traditional, subject-centered high schools. My intent here is to suggest a procedure which will allow the high school teacher to move to an open classroom even in a traditional school setting.

To begin with, let me clarify my notion of an open classroom. Simply put, it is *an instructional environment that facilitates the greatest amount of personal and intellectual activity on the part of the student.* I have arrived at this notion by proposing several assumptions about teaching and the role of the learner. Perhaps clarification of these assumptions will aid in interpreting my perspective. First, I accept B. Othanel Smith's notion that " . . . teaching is a system of actions intended to induce learning."[1] By accepting Smith's notion, the emphasis can be placed on the intentional aspect of teaching, and this in turn stresses planning in teaching. Second, and this is an extension of my first assumption, I feel teaching is a sequence of decision-making. Thus, I assume that the teacher uses critical thinking skills when he/she plans the decisions that will facilitate learning on the part of the students.

Obviously the acceptance of the above assumptions does not guarantee an open classroom as I have defined it to be. This is best illustrated by examining a continuum of teaching activities as proposed by Thomas Green.[2] On Green's continuum he proposed that the activities associated with teaching can be placed in two groups: one group emphasizes thinking while the other deals with performing. These activities are then placed along a continuum of intelligence. The intelligence component is judged by what the teacher does and what the teacher intends for the student to do.

A CONTINUUM[3]

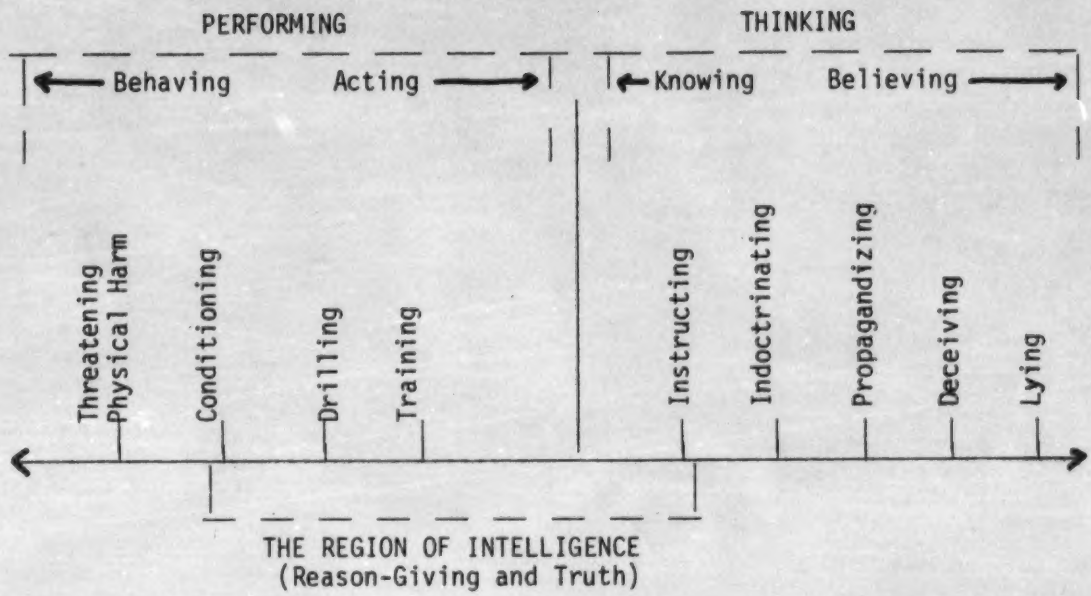

Figure 1

As can be seen when a teacher decides to utilize conditioning or behavior modification in the classroom it calls for little or no intellectual activity on the part of the student. Thus, conditioning, drilling, and training are all teacher activities that have no place in the open classroom as I have defined it. These activities negate my third assumption. That is, in order to facilitate the maximum amount of personal and intellectual activity of the student, he/she must be given opportunities to weigh evidence, to reason, to draw conclusions. In short, the student must be involved in significant decision-making that causes him/her to critically think. This calls for the teacher when engaging in the intentional activity of planning to provide for student decision-making.

The high school teacher may feel that this is still not enough help in making those initial steps toward an open classroom. By going into a classroom and declaring that students are to have a major role in the decision-making process of what to study, how to proceed, when to evaluate, and so on will not necessarily result in a mutually satisfactory experience for teacher and student. In fact, chaos may reign supreme. What is needed is a carefully prepared, intentional plan of action. A source for this plan was presented by Muska Mosston.[4]

Mosston, too, begins with the basic axiom that teaching is a chain of decision-making. He then suggests that a variety of teaching styles can be determined by analyzing who makes what decision and when do they make it. To Mosston the anatomy of a teaching style consists of three decision sets: the pre-impact, the impact, and the post-impact decisions. In his model pre-impact decisions are planning and preparing types of decisions. The impact decisions are implementation and adjustment of pre-impact decisions. The post-impact decisions are evaluative in nature.

Recall for a moment the continuum proposed by Green. The area on the continuum that called for the greatest amount of intellectual activity on the part of the student was instructing. Now take that section and imagine expanding it in length. At the left end of the continuum place the teaching style where the teacher is making all decisions and the student is making none. Mosston calls this style of teaching the Command Style. Others may wish to call it the Lecture Style.

CONTINUUM OF TEACHING STYLES

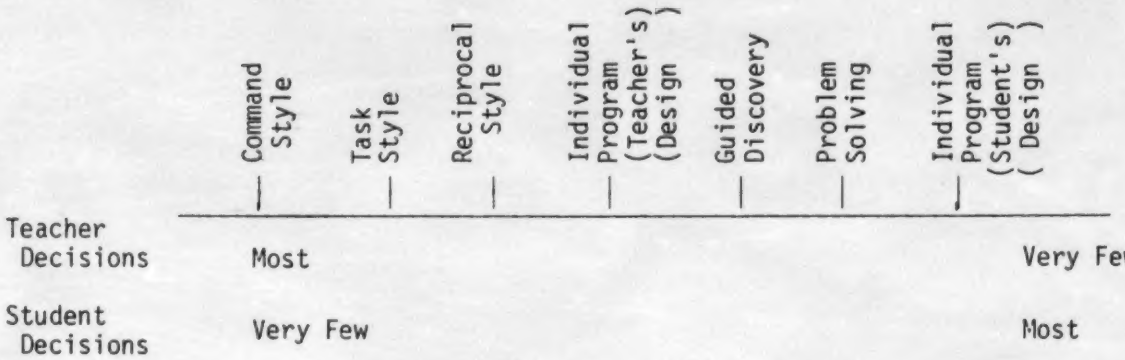

Figure 2

As more and more decision responsibilities are given to the students in the three decision sets the style of teaching changes. Mosston points out that the initial decisions given to the students should be in the impact and post-impact decision sets leaving the teacher control over the preparation decisions of what to teach? What style to use? Where to teach? and so on. By making this observation Mosston is assuming that students need a gradual exposure to decision-making and that too much too soon will result in chaos. Obviously, the high school classroom teacher is better able to make the judgment as to how much responsibility for decision-making his/her classes can assume without major disruptions.

My intention is not to review each of the styles as outlined and presented by Mosston. I should like to point out, however, one final thought regarding the continuum of styles. As the teacher moves along the continuum to the more student oriented styles, a significant and difficult behavioral change is required by the teacher. The teacher must move from declarative statements to question statements and equally improve in listening skills. If the teacher is to facilitate and not merely direct these changes must occur.

Hopefully, by now, my point is clear. To achieve an open classroom in the high school, the teacher must be willing to relinquish responsible decision-making to the students. Any high school teachers who are serious about operating an open classroom have at least one perspective on how to achieve

this type of instructional setting. If they accept the assumption that students are capable of making responsible decisions they are well on their way to having an open classroom in the high school.

Notes

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[2]Green, Thomas F. "A Topology of the Teaching Concept." *Studies in Philosophy and Education.* III:284-319, Winter 1964-65.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Mosston, Muska. *Teaching: From Command to Discovery.* Belmont: CA.: Wadsworth Publishing Co. 1972.

USMES — An Open Philosophy in Action

by

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Because "open space facilities" and "open education" are being used as interchangeable terms and "centers" seem to be going the way of ditto sheets, those who work in open education may be interested in a highly pragmatic program now available. The program is as much a teaching strategy as it is a program. It is as much a philosophy as to the way real learning takes place as it is a teaching strategy. Dr. Lee Shulman of the University of Michigan has described it as "...an attempt at synthesis." What is this program? It is the Unified Sciences and Mathematics for Elementary Schools (USMES).

A Philosophy ...

The USMES program evolved in response to the recommendations of the 1967 Cambridge Conference on the Correlation of Science and Mathematics in the Schools. These conference participants believed that the most important goal of science and mathematics education should be to "increase the ability of individuals to make informed decisions on matters affecting their own lives and society in general, that in order to accomplish this students should learn the process of solving real problems."

Work on the development of such a curriculum component began with Dr. Earl Lomon, 1967 Cambridge Conference participant, in 1970. Developed under the direction of Dr. Lomon by the Educational Development Center with a grant from the National Science Foundation, USMES is centered around real life problem solving. Students are challenged to solve real life problems within their immediate surroundings. Solving broad-based, real life problems entails using skills concepts, and processes from every facet of the curriculum. USMES takes, then, a philosophical position which holds that children are capable of designing and carrying out, with proper guidance from the teacher, the scientific investigations and mathematical activities needed to solve a real life problem. Such an approach reemphasizes the belief that human beings learn best when they are able to see that their work can lead to a concrete accomplishment.

Problem solving and decision making are, of course, far from being new ideas; and we know that certain versions of problem solving can be conducted under the most traditional of educational settings, that certain versions of that decision making can be incorporated into the most coersive of classroom atmospheres. By its very nature, the program seems to flourish best within a shared administrative power structure under the guidance of a teacher who has mastered the art of provocative questioning, who has an in-depth understanding of inductive reasoning, and who sees the learning process holistically.

The USMES process begins as students "center" upon a broadly-based, real life problem which they choose and for which they may be able to develop workable solutions. Through brain-storming sessions the group is guided to refine and categorize suggested solutions into manageable numbers of options. The large student group then subdivides into smaller groups. The division is based upon student interest in the investigation of one possible solution. During small group investigations, students are required to collect and record data, hypothesize, reformulate original theories, and act upon viable solutions. In responding to these "challenges" students are involved in all aspects of problem solving: observation, data collection, representation and analysis of data, formulation of hypotheses, research design, and decision making. Skill lessons and learning centers then emerge as students begin to realize certain needs and wants.

...in Action

To: USMES Central Staff
From: USMES Classroom Teacher
Re: USMES in the Classroom

Enclosed you will find our class USMES logs as requested. I have found, though, that the practice of keeping detailed logs is entirley too time consuming. Hopefully these highlights will prove to be at least somewhat useful to you in your studies.

The class which I've described below is my own self-contained seventh grade group. It was composed of thirty-one heterogeneously grouped students in the Early Adolescent Community at our open-space laboratory school facility. Approximately 50 percent of the class was Black, 50 percent was White, 50 percent were girls, and 50 percent were boys. The students were from families with predominately middle class range backgrounds within our rural/suburban community.

Day 1

Today I introduced the challenge to the class. It was from the "Consumer Research" unit: find the best buy in paper towels. Students brainstormed, suggesting dozens of reasons as to why consumers choose one towel as opposed to another. We wrote these suggestions on the board.

Day 2

The class worked today combining, refining, and consolidating many of their original suggestions. Once the group was satisfied with the list, they formulated possible "tests" which might be appropriate for each consumer choice. Finally, the students divided themselves into five smaller working groups, based on interest and ideas. One group wants to run several tests on various brands of paper towels, all purchased at one store. Another wants to run a few in-depth price-comparison studies.

Day 3

I asked each group to select a leader, coordinator, or spokesman; to choose a secretary who is to keep a detailed record of each group

meeting; and to devise a method for graphing all information uncovered in the group's investigations.

I've found that I spend most of the work time circulating among the small groups. It is difficult to refrain from making direct suggestions to the group, but rather to simply guide them by provocative questioning!

Interesting note: leadership is varied. Some groups seem to have a very democratic leader while others choose to operate under almost despotic rule.

Day 12

When we reassemble as a large group at the end of each work session, I find that the students are communicating more directly with each other. I no longer have to be the "filter" in many of their conversations.

Work sessions often end in specific skills learning. Several groups have discovered that their calculations require a knowledge of fractions and decimals, for instance. "Centers" in the class area and skill lessons have arisen in response to such "felt needs."

Day 20

The students are doing beautifully! There has been no need for "memorizing" the scientific method; the class is employing it. Mentioning the terms "constants" and "variables" or "consequence" and "responsibility" is unnecessary. Students have discovered, for themselves, the essence of the terms. More than anything "measurable," the students are learning, as one student put it, ". . . that I want to learn."

Day 25

What are the conclusions which the class reached? Well, they discovered mislabeled packaging in one case; price-fixing in another instance; but, their overall conclusion was simple: no one test or set of tests can determine "best buys." People select different brands and different stores for individual reasons. The whole thing is largely a matter of personal choice.

Closing Thoughts

USMES materials provide, in detail, teacher-tried ideas for classroom procedure in the solutions of more than a dozen basic "challenges" or problems. The suggestions are directed at the teacher as there are no student textbooks, workbooks, or preconceived recipe-type instructions which students are expected to follow. The program is organized into inter-disciplinary, non-sequential units. They may be used at any grade level, for the level at which students approach a problem, the investigations which they choose to make, and conclusions or solutions at which they arrive may vary according to the age and abilities of the students involved. USMES may, therefore, be used as a total approach to curriculum development or as enrichment to specific, ongoing programs.

The question arises: How effectively does an approach in which

students learn basic skills within the context of solving real life, "hands on" problems work? Research seems to indicate that real problem-solving processes in USMES, though not directly measurable in and of themselves, do seem to increase the amount of skill instruction reported. There tends to be an increase in the overall level of basic skills instructions across four categories of skills: math skills, language arts skills, science concepts, and social studies concepts of the combination. Of the groups studies, 43 percent showed individually significant positive effects at at least the .05 level.[1]

More detailed information regarding the effectiveness of USMES upon student learnings and attitudes is available, upon request, from its publisher. The program itself is being disseminated by regional teams strategically located throughout the United States. Persons interested in further information regarding the USMES program, the procedures for arranging in-service programs, or acquisition of printed USMES materials are encouraged to contact their Regional Team via the program's publisher: Moore Publishing Co., P.O. Box 3036, West Durham Station, Durham, North Carolina, 27705.

[1]Stalker, George. USMES School Study. Newton, Mass: EDC, 1978.